

HEALTH CARE SYSTEM FOR VETERANS

(Mr. ALTMIRE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. ALTMIRE. Madam Speaker, as we listen to the politicized rhetoric we are hearing from the other side today, let's keep one thing in mind; there is no group that will stand ahead of our Nation's veterans when it comes time for this Congress to make Federal funding decisions.

This Congress, after years and years of underfunding the VA, this Congress added \$13 billion of increased funding to the Veterans Affairs health care system. It's the largest increase in the 77-year history of the VA health care system. We are going to send that bill to the President, and if he chooses to veto it, we have the opportunity to override it. I can guarantee you that the Democrats in this House are going to vote to override it.

Madam Speaker, you tell me who is responsible if the veterans don't receive their funding on time.

POLITICS AND PASSPORTS

(Mr. POE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. POE. Madam Speaker, with all the discussion about protecting our vulnerable borders from illegal intrusion by smugglers, criminals and fortune hunters, Homeland Security is missing the obvious.

Legal ports of entry are as easy for illegals to cross as the remote areas of America's porous borders. Media sources report that the Government Accountability Office did a study that showed at least 10 percent of the illegals who try to unlawfully enter the U.S. at ports of entry are successful.

These failures to detect include drug and weapons smugglers and one individual who had an incurable type of TB who was allowed to illegally enter the United States 76 times. Homeland Security doesn't argue with the results of the GAO but simply makes excuses.

One solution, however, is to require all people entering the United States at ports of entry to have a valid passport where the U.S. can record who enters and who leaves our country. The 9/11 Commission recommended the passport, but politics and the governments of Mexico and Canada and the open borders crowd seem to keep this common sense idea from becoming a reality. The security of this Nation deserves better. We need to use passports.

And that's just the way it is.

SUPPORT OUR TROOPS AND VETERANS

(Ms. SHEA-PORTER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. Madam Speaker, I was a military spouse, and I am the proud wife of a veteran now.

Of course, I support the veterans. I am also on the Armed Services Committee, and it is in that capacity that I have had the sad task of listening to what the administration has done to our servicemen and women and to our veterans.

We just need to say a name of a couple of hospitals to understand that the President has not honored the commitments to our troops. This democratically led Congress is honoring commitments. We have passed the greatest budget in history for our veterans.

But we have another problem with the President right now. The President wants to give our brave troops only a 3 percent pay increase, and the Democrats are leading the fight for 3.5 percent pay increase.

Why is the President refusing to give our soldiers, who are fighting for us, an increase in pay? Only the President and this administration can answer that question.

I want America to know that I am the proud wife of a veteran. I am here, along with my colleagues, to fight for veterans, and that's what we are doing every day.

OUR VETERANS DESERVE OUR SUPPORT, NOT CHEAP PARTISAN POLITICS

(Mrs. MILLER of Michigan asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. MILLER of Michigan. Madam Speaker, on October 8, 1954, President Dwight Eisenhower signed a proclamation urging all Americans to observe each November 11 as Veterans Day. That proclamation said the following:

"On that day, let us solemnly remember the sacrifices of all those who fought so valiantly, on the seas, in the air, and on foreign shores, to preserve our heritage of freedom . . ."

There is broad bipartisan support for the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs appropriations bill in both Houses of Congress. The President has indicated that he will sign the bill.

I call on the leadership of this House to bring that bill to the floor, by itself on its own, this week, so that it can be signed into law before Veterans Day. During this time of war, we need to show our veterans and those on active duty that we honor the service and the sacrifice of those who have answered freedom's call.

Please let us rise above the politics and do what is right to honor our veterans.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR THE TROOPS

(Mrs. GILLIBRAND asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of Mr. MURPHY's resolution to strongly urge the President to give our soldiers, sailors, air-

men and marines the pay raise that they deserve.

The military families in my district have sacrificed more than any of us could ever imagine, for mothers and fathers who have to run households while their spouses are deployed over and over again, to parents and grandparents that watch the news every night with dismay, to returning soldiers that have to piece together their lives upon the return from a war zone.

These families deserve more than just the cost-of-living adjustment proposed by the President. They deserve a raise. While the 3.5 percent increase that we are able to add to the defense authorization bill is a good start, there is much more that we can and should do. Yet the President may still veto this raise.

I urge my colleagues to vote for this resolution, to tell the President to lift his objection to this well-deserved raise for the brave men and women who serve in our military.

OUR VETERANS DESERVE BETTER

(Mr. DAVIS of Kentucky asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DAVIS of Kentucky. Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of our Nation's veterans who have fought hard to protect our freedoms and preserve our liberties.

It has been over 140 days, more than 4 months since the House passed the MilCon-VA appropriations bill and nearly 8 weeks since the Senate passed it. My colleagues on both sides of the aisle joined together to craft and pass this important legislation, and the President is standing by, waiting to sign it into law.

Yet it was only last week the Democratic leadership announced that they were finally going to take action, not to pass the bill, but, instead, to use funding of our veterans as a political tool to help ensure passage of a massive increase in spending in the Labor-HHS appropriations bill.

I stand here today in support of our Nation's veterans, in support of MilCon-VA appropriations, and staunchly oppose the Democratic leadership's attempt to use veterans as human shields to pass this bad Labor-HHS bill.

Our veterans deserve better and Congress must deliver.

DEMOCRATS HAVE PRIORITIZED THE NEEDS OF OUR VETERANS SINCE DAY ONE

(Mr. LYNCH asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. LYNCH. Madam Speaker, I do want to encourage my colleagues across the aisle to remember the history here.

It was not long ago that the previous VA Secretary, Mr. Nicholson, came before this House and complained that

the VA was \$1.1 billion in the red. That was under a House Leadership that was Republican, and that left short many of the needs of our veterans.

It was when the Democrats in January took over that we pushed this largest single appropriations bill in the history of the VA to address all of those unmet needs, and I just asked my colleagues across the aisle to work with us. No one is complaining here today about the content of that bill or the process that brought it to this floor.

Many of the ideas in that bill are part and parcel of what my colleagues on the other side of the aisle would hope for. We just need to work together today to get this bill to the floor, get it done, and get it to the President for his signature.

COUPLING APPROPRIATIONS BILLS

(Mr. GOODLATTE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GOODLATTE. Madam Speaker, I rise today to oppose the majority's plan to combine two unrelated appropriations bills, the Department of Labor, Health and Human Services and Department of Education and the funding for Veterans and Military Construction.

I oppose this combined approach because, in doing so, the Democrat majority is using political maneuvering to avoid tough spending choices in the controversial Labor-HHS and Education bill.

I hope we all agree that we need to keep our commitment to veterans by supporting veterans benefits and military construction provisions. But the majority should not use the popularity of veterans funding to build a legislative Christmas tree by including labor and health spending at \$10 billion above the President's request.

No one is fooled by this craven manipulation of benefits for our Nation's veterans. Let's debate these bills individually, rather than holding funding for veterans military care and military facilities hostage with a controversial bill.

MAKING HISTORIC INVESTMENT IN OUR VETERAN CARE

(Mrs. BOYDA of Kansas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. BOYDA of Kansas. Madam Speaker, veterans are a number one issue in the State of Kansas. We found it just appalling how shameful the lack of funding for our veterans had become.

When I came to this Congress, I can't tell you how pleased I was that we put \$5.2 billion of emergency spending into our veterans funding, and a lot of that came right into the good hospitals of Kansas. That \$5.2 billion of emergency funding was also called "pork." How somebody could call funding our veterans "pork" was just beyond me.

Today, we are making a historic investment in our veteran care. I am hoping that we can come together across the aisle in a bipartisan manner and stand up for our veterans and insist that our President sign this bill and start to take care of our veterans as they should have been.

CONCERN OVER DELAY IN FUNDING FOR VETERANS

(Mr. KLINE of Minnesota asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KLINE of Minnesota. Madam Speaker, I rise today to join my colleagues in asking the leadership of this House to bring the Military Construction and VA funding bill to the floor for a stand-alone vote.

Earlier this year, many of us felt the pain when a young marine in my district committed suicide after honorably serving in Iraq after he visited two VA hospitals. We recognize, as a body here, that we need to provide the funding for our VA. We passed the bill in this House, 409-2. This is a bill with bipartisan support.

We have heard rhetoric from the other side of the floor that says this is so important that we should pass this legislation no matter what pork-laden legislation it's tied to. That's what is the trouble here, my colleagues, is that the leadership of this House has taken a cynical action to attach an important bill that has strong bipartisan support to a piece of legislation they know that many of us did not support and the President has promised a veto.

I ask the leadership to reach out, as one of my colleagues said, and work in a bipartisan way, which is easily done by separating this legislation. Let's get it done today.

OUR COMMITMENT TO THE BRAVE MEN AND WOMEN WHO SERVE OVERSEAS

(Mr. PALLONE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PALLONE. Madam Speaker, war has changed, but our commitment to the brave men and women who serve overseas remains the same. This Democratic Congress today is passing a veterans bill prioritizing veterans by fully funding the Veterans Administration. We recognize the changing needs of our new veterans by allocating funding to address conditions like PTSD, and we supported a pay raise for military families that this President, who has no trouble sending our troops and billions of dollars into Iraq, called unnecessary.

Now, today, we are going to finally pass this Veterans appropriations bill. We are going to keep the promise we made to service men and women when they volunteered to serve our Nation overseas by taking care of them when they come home. This is the largest veterans increase for health care in

history. This is the commitment of the Democratic prompt of the Democratic Congress, and we are going to make sure it happens today, regardless of what the President decides to do, if he vetoes it or not.

We will just come back again and again and again regardless of his veto. We are tired of the fact that this President gets up and says that he supports these initiatives but then vetoes them.

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TRICK OR TREATING IN CONGRESS

(Mrs. BACHMANN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. BACHMANN. Madam Speaker, Halloween was last week, but trick or treating may be a part of the House of Representatives this week if the Democrats have their way on the veterans funding bill.

It was over 140 days ago that this Congress passed a veterans funding bill. It was a good bill. So why hasn't this bill made its way to the President's desk? The President has said he will sign this bill. Our veterans need this funding. They deserve this funding that the bill would provide.

Instead, the Democrats are preempting Thanksgiving holiday by serving up a turkey of a funding bill, a turkey that is filled with pork-based stuffing.

The business of national defense and the business of taking care of the very real needs of our veterans is just too important just to satisfy the urge to spend extra money that we just don't have in order to fund pet projects.

I want to say thank you to America's veterans, to those veterans who go to our veterans health care center in St. Cloud, Minnesota. I want to thank you for what you have done, for your sacrifice for this country.

Let's pass this bill.

MOMENT OF SILENCE HONORING THE SACRIFICE OF SERGEANT LOUIS GRIESE

(Mr. KAGEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. KAGEN. Madam Speaker, Louis Griesse served with honor, with courage and skill; and last week on October 31, he lost his life while serving his third tour of duty in Iraq.

Please join me in honoring his memory. He leaves behind a wife, Stephany, and 4-month-old daughter, Skylar.

Sergeant Louis Griesse of Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin, was killed as a result of wounds incurred from a roadside bomb. His family believes in service to one's Nation. A true believer in service, Sergeant Griesse followed in the footsteps of his father who fought in the Korean War.

Sergeant Griesse's mother, Susan Frihart, described her son, saying, "He